

IN THE CLAIMS:

A complete listing of the claims is set forth below. This listing of claims will replace all prior version, and listings, of claims in the application:

1.-2. **(Cancelled)**

3. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 6, wherein the first version of the business application is operable, if the first version of the business application is an initiator of the business process, to control the business process if the second version is not higher than the first version.

4. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 6, wherein the first version of the business application further comprises a business process module operable to:

generate a first business message associated with the business process for communication to the second client, the first business message being generated according to the second version; and

initiate retrieval from the second client of a second business message generated according to the second version.

5. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 6, wherein the first client is operable to receive a status message from the second client indicating the presence of a business message associated with the business process at the second client, the status message being generated according to a status message protocol supported by the first version of the business application and the second version of the business application.

6. **(Currently Amended)** A system for performing a business process, comprising:

a first version of a business application identified using a first version identifier and executable by a first client to perform the business process, the first client being coupled to a second client using a communication link, a second version of the business application identified using a second version identifier being executable by the second client to perform the business process;

the first version of the business application operable to determine the first version identifier and the second version identifier and, if the first version is higher than the second version, to exercise control over execution of the business process;

the first version of the business application operable to allow the second version of the business application to exercise control over execution of the business process if the second version is higher than the first ~~version~~ version,

wherein the first version of the business application comprises a version identification module operable to generate a version identification request for communication to the second client, the version identification request being associated with the business process and generated according to a version identification protocol supported by the first version of the business application and the second version of the business application, a version identification module of the second version of the business application initiating communication of the second version identifier to the first version of the business application in response to the version identification request.

7. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 6, wherein the first version of the business application further comprises a business process module operable to generate a business message associated with the business process for retrieval by the second client, the business message being generated according to the first version.

8. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 6, wherein the first version of the business application further comprises a status message module operable to generate a status message for communication to the second client to indicate the presence of a business message associated with the business process at the first client, the status message being generated according to a status message protocol supported by the first version of the business application and the second version of the business application.

9. **(Cancelled)**

10. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 15, further comprising:
generating a version identification request for communication from the first client to the second client; and
receiving the second version identifier from the second client in response to the version identification request.

11. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 10, wherein the version identification request is generated according to a version identification protocol that is supported by the first version of the business application and the second version of the business application.

12. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 15, further comprising, if the first version of the business application is an initiator of the business process, controlling the business process at the first client if the second version is not higher than the first version.

13. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 15, further comprising:
generating a first business message associated with the business process for communication from the first client to the second client, the first business message being generated according to the second version; and
retrieving from the second client a second business message generated by the second client according to the second version.

14. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 15, further comprising:
at the first client, receiving a status message generated by the second client according to a status message protocol that is supported by the first version of the business application and the second version of the business application, the status message indicating the presence of a business message associated with the business process at the second client; and
retrieving the business message from the second client in response to the status message.

15. **(Currently Amended)** A method for performing a business process, comprising:
at a first client, determining a first version identifier associated with a first version of a business application used by the first client to perform the business process;
at the first client, determining a second version identifier associated with a second version of the business application used by a second client to perform the business process;
at the first client, exercising control over execution of the business process if the first version is higher than the second version; and
at the first client, allowing the second version of the business application to exercise control over execution of the business process if the second version is higher than the first ~~version.~~ version,
further comprising communicating a status message from the first client to the second client according to a status message protocol supported by the first version of the business application and the second version of the business application, the status message indicating the presence of a business message associated with the business process at the first client.

16. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 15, further comprising generating at the first client a business message associated with the business process for retrieval by the second client, the business message being generated according to the second version.

17. **(Cancelled)**

18. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 15, further comprising:
performing the business process according to the first version if the second version is higher than the first version; and
performing the business process according to the second version if the first version is higher than the second version.

19. **(Cancelled)**

20. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 25, further operable to:
generate a version identification request for communication from the first client to the second client; and
receive the second version identifier from the second client in response to the version identification request.

21. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 20, wherein the version identification request is generated according to a version identification protocol that is supported by the first version of the business application and the second version of the business application.

22. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 25, further operable to, if the first version of the business application is an initiator of the business process, control the business process at the first client if the second version is not higher than the first version.

23. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 25, further operable to:
generate a first business message associated with the business process for communication from the first client to the second client, the first business message being generated according to the second version; and
retrieve from the second client a second business message generated by the second client according to the second version.

24. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 25, further operable to:
at the first client, receive a status message generated by the second client according to a status message protocol that is supported by the first version of the business application and the second version of the business application, the status message indicating the presence of a business message associated with the business process at the second client; and
retrieve the business message from the second client in response to the status message.

25. **(Currently Amended)** Software for performing a business process, the software being encoded on a computer-readable medium and when executed operable to:
at a first client, determine a first version identifier associated with a first version of a business application used by the first client to perform the business process;
at the first client, determine a second version identifier associated with a second version of the business application used by a second client to perform the business process;
at the first client, exercise control over execution of the business process if the first version is higher than the second version; and
at the first client, allow the second version of the business application to exercise control over execution of the business process if the second version is higher than the first ~~version~~ version,
wherein the first version of the business application exhibits backward compatibility with the second version of the business application, the first version of the business application being capable of performing the business process according to either the first version or the second version.

26. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 25, further operable to generate at the first client a business message associated with the business process for retrieval by the second client, the business message being generated according to the second version.

27. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 25, further operable to communicate a status message from the first client to the second client according to a status message protocol supported by the first version of the business application and the second version of the business application, the status message indicating the presence of a business message associated with the business process at the first client.

28. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 25, further operable to:
perform the business process according to the first version if the second version is higher than the first version; and
perform the business process according to the second version if the first version is higher than the second version.

29. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 6, wherein the first version is higher than the second version if the first version is one or more of:
more robust than the second version;
more advanced than the second version; and
capable of providing enhanced functionality or services, relative to the second version, in performing the business process.

30. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 6, wherein the first version of the business application exhibits backward compatibility with the second version of the business application, the first version of the business application being capable of performing the business process according to either the first version or the second version.

31. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 6, wherein the first business application of the first client can be upgraded from the first version to a higher version without negatively impacting any other clients in the system.

32. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 6, wherein the first and second versions of the business application each exhibit bidirectional executability in that each can execute a business process that it did not itself initiate.

33. **(Previously Presented)** The system of Claim 6, wherein:
the first client is associated with a buyer enterprise;
the second client is associated with a seller enterprise;
the business process comprises an order purchasing business process; the first business message comprises a purchase order; and
the second business message comprises a purchase order acknowledgement.

34. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 15, wherein the first version is higher than the second version if the first version is one or more of:
more robust than the second version;
more advanced than the second version; and
capable of providing enhanced functionality or services, relative to the second version, in performing the business process.

35. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 15, wherein the first version of the business application exhibits backward compatibility with the second version of the business application, the first version of the business application being capable of performing the business process according to either the first version or the second version.

36. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 15, wherein the first business application of the first client can be upgraded from the first version to a higher version without negatively impacting any other clients in the system.

37. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 15, wherein the first and second versions of the business application each exhibit bidirectional executability in that each can execute a business process that it did not itself initiate.

38. **(Previously Presented)** The method of Claim 15, wherein:
the first client is associated with a buyer enterprise;
the second client is associated with a seller enterprise;
the business process comprises an order purchasing business process; the first business message comprises a purchase order; and
the second business message comprises a purchase order acknowledgement.

39. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 25, wherein the first version is higher than the second version if the first version is one or more of:
more robust than the second version;
more advanced than the second version; and
capable of providing enhanced functionality or services, relative to the second version, in performing the business process.

40. **(Cancelled)**

41. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 25, wherein the first business application of the first client can be upgraded from the first version to a higher version without negatively impacting any other clients in the system.

42. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 25, wherein the first and second versions of the business application each exhibit bidirectional executability in that each can execute a business process that it did not itself initiate.

43. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 25, wherein:
the first client is associated with a buyer enterprise;
the second client is associated with a seller enterprise;
the business process comprises an order purchasing business process; the first business message comprises a purchase order; and
the second business message comprises a purchase order acknowledgement.

44. **(Currently Amended)** A system for performing a business process, comprising:

means for, at a first client, determining a first version identifier associated with a first version of a business application used by the first client to perform the business process;

means for, at the first client, determining a second version identifier associated with a second version of the business application used by a second client to perform the business process; and

means for, at the first client, exercising control over execution of the business process if the first version is higher than the second version; [[and]]

means for, at the first client, allowing the second version of the business application to exercise control over execution of the business process if the second version is higher than the first version- version; and

means for communicating a status message from the first client to the second client according to a status message protocol supported by the first version of the business application and the second version of the business application, the status message indicating the presence of a business message associated with the business process at the first client.